

The Macomb Daily

County Department of Roads prepares for winter



Macomb Daily staff photo by Craig Gaffield)

Leo Ciavatta, maintenance supervisor for the Macomb County Department of Roads, and Jim Rogers, foreman, check out salt supplies as they gear up to maintain nearly 1,900 miles of road this winter.

By Frank DeFrank - Macomb Daily Staff Writer - December 2, 2011

Macomb motorists got a small taste this week of what's ahead in the coming months when a dusting of snow created some slippery driving conditions around the county.

The white stuff didn't last long, but it did serve as a reminder for the men and women responsible for keeping county roads clear of ice: Those who drive will soon need your help.

The Macomb County Department of Roads' service centers teemed with activity this week as supervisors and workers geared up for whatever Mother Nature throws at the county. The department will go to war in the winter of 2011-2012 with a fleet of about 150 plows and salt trucks to maintain some 1,877 miles of road.

"We'll do the best we can," said Leo Ciavatta, maintenance supervisor for the roads department. "At this point, our salt supply is full, our equipment is up to speed and our drivers are well-experienced."

If that sounds like a recipe for tackling Michigan winters, it is, albeit with one significant caveat.

"Yes, we feel we're ready to take on winter," Ciavatta said. "As long as we don't get some of those colossal storms like they have on the east coast."

Road department officials have budgeted approximately \$6.2 million for winter maintenance, and that includes money the department receives from the state to maintain its roads as well.

If that sounds like a lot, consider last year – which produced its share of heavy snowfall -- the department exhausted about 90 percent of its budget by mid-February.

While nobody can predict exactly when the next heavy snowfall will arrive, road department employees figure they can handle it. But they could use a little help when drivers encounter the plows and trucks.

of roads figures it's ready to handle it. But they 13-year snowplow driver Steve Baurhenn has a request of county drivers.

“Just give us some space,” said Steve Baurhenn, a 13-year snowplow driver. “Back off and don’t crowd us. ... If we can’t see you in the mirror, we can’t see you ... Stay out of the blind spots and hang back, and we’ll clear a path for you.”